

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1       1. (ORIGINAL) In an intermediate network device having a plurality of ports for for-  
2       warding network messages within a bridged network, a method for efficiently transition-  
3       ing the ports among a plurality of spanning tree protocol (STP) states, the method com-  
4       prising the steps of:

5             executing the STP at the intermediate network device so as to elect a root of the  
6       bridged network and to assign one of the device's ports to a Root Port Role, one or more  
7       of the device's ports to an Alternate Port Role, and one or more of the device's ports to a  
8       Designated Port Role;

9             transitioning the ports assigned to the Root Port Role and the Designated Port  
10      Role to a forwarding STP state;

11             transitioning the one or more ports assigned to the Alternate Port Role to a dis-  
12      carding STP state;

13             receiving a bridge protocol data unit (BPDU) message, the BPDU message having  
14      a proposal flag that is asserted; and

15             if the BPDU message was received on the port assigned the Root Port Role, leav-  
16      ing the one or more ports assigned to the Designated Port Role in the forwarding STP  
17      state, provided that the one or more ports assigned to the Alternate Port Role are in the  
18      discarding STP state.

1       2. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1 wherein the STP substantially complies with the  
2       Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) 802.1w Rapid Spanning Tree  
3       Protocol (RSTP) specification standard.

1       3. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1 wherein, in response to receiving the BPDU mes-  
2       sage with the proposal flag asserted, the device does not issue one or more BPDU mes-  
3       sages from its ports assigned to the Designated Port Role.

1    4. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of issuing a BPDU  
2    message from the port assigned to the Root Port Role, the issued BPDU message having  
3    an agreement flag that is asserted.

1    5. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:  
2         transitioning one or more ports assigned to the Designated Port Role to a discarding  
3         STP state, if the BPDU message with the asserted proposal flag is received on a port  
4         other than the port assigned to the Root Port Role; and  
5         upon transitioning the one or more ports assigned to the Designated Port Role to  
6         the discarding state, issuing a BPDU message from the port on which the BPDU message  
7         with the asserted proposal flag was received, the issued BPDU message having an  
8         agreement flag that is asserted.

1    6. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of, if the one or more  
2    ports assigned the Alternate Port Role is not in the discarding STP state, placing such  
3    ports in the discarding STP state.

1    7. (ORIGINAL) An intermediate network device configured to forward network messages within a bridged network, the device having a plurality of ports for connecting the device to one or more network entities, the intermediate network device comprising:  
2         a port role selection state machine configured to assign roles to the ports;  
3         a port transition state machine configured to transition the ports among a plurality  
4         of spanning tree protocol (STP) states depending on the assigned roles; and  
5         a sync manager for use in executing the STP, wherein,  
6                 the port role selection state machine and the port transition state machine  
7                 cooperate so as to assign one of the device's ports to a Root Port Role, to assign  
8                 one or more of the device's ports to an Alternate Port Role, and to assign one or  
9                 more of the device's ports to a Designated Port Role,  
10  
11

12           the port role selection state machine and the port transition state machine  
13           further cooperating to transition the ports assigned to the Root Port Role and the  
14           Designated Port Role to a forwarding STP state and to transition the one or more  
15           ports assigned to the Alternate port role to a discarding STP state, and

16           in response to receiving a bridge protocol data unit (BPDU) message hav-  
17           ing a proposal flag that is asserted, the sync manager cooperates with the port  
18           transition state machine to leave one or more of the ports assigned to the Desig-  
19           nated Port Role in the forwarding STP state, provided that the BPDU message  
20           was received on the port assigned the Root Port Role and further provided that the  
21           one or more ports assigned to the Alternate Port Role are in a discarding STP  
22           state.

1       8. (ORIGINAL) The intermediate network device of claim 7 further comprising a for-  
2       warding engine configured to forward network messages received on a first port to one or  
3       more second ports.

1       9. (ORIGINAL) The intermediate network device of claim 7 wherein the STP executed  
2       by the device substantially complies with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engi-  
3       neers (IEEE) 802.1w Rapid Spanning Tree Protocol (RSTP) specification standard.

1       10. (ORIGINAL) The intermediate network device of claim 7 further comprising a  
2       BPDU message generator, wherein the sync manager cooperates with the BPDU message  
3       generator to have a BPDU message issued from the port assigned to the Root Port Role,  
4       the issued BPDU message having an agreement flag that is asserted.

1       11. (ORIGINAL) In an intermediate network device having a plurality of ports for for-  
2       warding network messages within a bridged network, a method for efficiently transition-  
3       ing the ports among a plurality of spanning tree protocol (STP) states, the method com-  
4       prising the steps of:

5           executing the STP at the intermediate network device so as to elect a root of the  
6       bridged network, to designate a port of the device to be the current root port and to assign  
7       one or more of the device's ports to a Designated Port Role;

8           transitioning the ports assigned to the Designated Port Role to a forwarding STP  
9       state;

10          receiving a bridge protocol data unit (BPDU) message, the BPDU message having  
11       a proposal flag that is asserted; and

12          if the proposal-BPDU message was received on the current root port, leaving the  
13       one or more ports assigned to the Designated Port Role in the forwarding STP state.

1       12. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of, if the proposal-  
2       BPDU message was received on a newly elected root port, identifying the current root  
3       port as a previous root port, transitioning the previous root port to a blocking STP state  
4       and leaving the one or more ports assigned to the Designated Port Role in the forwarding  
5       STP state.

1       13. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of issuing a BPDU  
2       message from the port on which the proposal-BPDU message was received, the issued  
3       BPDU message having an agreement flag that is asserted.

1       14-40. (CANCELLED)